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C O N F I D E N T I A L LILONGWE 000361

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S - E. PELLETREAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/19/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL MI

SUBJECT: MALAWI: SADC MINISTERIAL TROIKA VISITS PRESIDENT MUTHARIKA

REF: A. LILONGWE 307
1B. LILONGWE 294
1C. LILONGWE 286
1D. LILONGWE 280

Classified By: Political Officer John Letvin for reason 1.4(d).

(C) 1. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Henri Mumba confirmed to emboff that a SADC Ministerial Troika led by Angolan Minister of External Relations Joao Miranda visited Malawi on June 17 and June 18. Mumba commented that the visit was prompted by concerns over the recent coup allegations against Mutharika (reflets). Mumba said the visit was supposed to be kept quiet and that the troika met with President Mutharika only. He continued that he had not yet been briefed on the outcome of the talks, but understood the talks were focused on evidence of the coup and did not discuss potential mediation efforts for the current parliamentary impasse.

12. (C) Comment: Mumba seemed genuinely surprised that news of the SADC troika visit had been released to the press. Former president Muluzi and the United Democratic Front (UDF) have already begun to use the SADC troika visit to push propaganda on the virulently pro-Muluzi/anti-Mutharika Nyasa Times website to the effect that the SADC troika told Mutharika he had no right to meddle with the United Democratic Front's (UDF) choice of presidential candidate. However both Mumba and the UDF confirmed that SADC did not meet with Muluzi on their visit. While the troika visit came at an opportune time, just days before Mutharika's proclaimed June 20 deadline for the Parliament to pass the national budget, if the purpose of the visit was to notify Mutharika that SADC was watching his actions, the effects were not immediately apparent. In Mutharika's first post-troika comments, made at a June 18 rally in Blantyre, he continued to blast Muluzi for causing chaos in Parliament and reiterated he expects the budget by June 20. A Presidential address to the nation has been announced for this evening (June 19), the eve of Mutharika's deadline, so we expect Mutharika's next move in the stalemate to be announced at that time. End Comment.

EASTHAM